

Message Text

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ACTION SCI-06

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3514

INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

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E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: ECON, TGEN, BR

SUBJECT: NUCLEAR ENERGY CONFERENCE IN RIO

1. I UNDERSTAND FROM A TELEPHONE CALL THIS MORNING FROM THE DEPT THAT THE VISIT OF FOUR SENIOR ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION OFFICIALS, INCLUDING COMMISSIONER ANDERS, SCHEDULED FOR JUNE 10, 11, 12, MAY BE POSTPONED UNTIL AFTER A REORGANIZATION OF THE AEC TAKES PLACE, THAT IS, UNTIL SEVERAL MONTHS FROM NOW. A POSTPONEMENT WOULD CAUSE BOTH THE MISSION AND THE COOPERATING BRAZILIAN AGENCY, THE NATIONAL COMMISSION OF NUCLEAR ENERGY (CNEN)"" BRAZIL'S AEC-- SERIOUS EMBARRASSMENT AND WOULD AFFECT ADVERSELY U.S. INTERESTS IN THE NUCLEAR ENERGY FIELD IN THIS IMPORTANT COUNTRY. I URGE MOST STRONGLY THAT THE SCHEDULED VISIT BE MAINTAINED.

2. ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE VISIT AND THE PROGRAM--A CONFERENCE ON REACTOR TECHNOLOGY, SAFETY AND ECONOMICS FOR BRAZILIAN NUCLEAR ENERGY EXPERTS--ARE IN THE FINAL STAGE. INVITATIONS HAVE GONE OUT TO BRAZIL'S TOP NUCLEAR PHYSICISTS AND POLICY MAKERS IN THE ENERGY FIELD TO ATTEND THE TWO-DAY CONFERENCE

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IN RIO. THE CONFERENCE FOLLOWS A ONE-DAY VISIT TO BRASILIA

WHERE THE AEC VISITORS WERE SCHEDULED TO CONFER WITH THE MINISTER OF MINES AND ENERGY, THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, THE MINISTER-CHIEF OF THE PRESIDENT'S SECRETARIAT OF NATIONAL PLANNING, AND THE ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER. A MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES' COMMISSION OF MINES AND ENERGY WAS ALSO PLANNED. FOR THE RIO CONFERENCE, INTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS OF MAJOR ASPECTS OF NUCLEAR ENERGY-RELATED ISSUES ARE PLANNED. THE FACT THAT THE CNEN, OBVIOUSLY VERY INTERESTED IN THE SUBJECT MATTER AND IMPRESSED BY THE CALIBER OF THE U.S. VISITORS, ENTHUSIASTICALLY AGREED TO CO-SPONSOR AND COOPERATE IN THE CONFERENCE WAS PARTICULARLY GRATIFYING TO US BECAUSE COMPETITION AMONG FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS FOR THE ATTENTION AND INTEREST OF THE CNEN IS, FOR OBVIOUS REASONS, INTENSE. FOR US TO POSTPONE THE VISIT NOW, WITH VERY LITTLE NOTICE, WOULD MAKE A MOCKERY OF THE IMPORTANCE WE--AND THE CNEN--HAVE ATTACHED TO THE VISIT. IT WILL NOT BE EASY TO EXPLAIN HOW AN ABSENCE FROM WASHINGTON OF NOT MORE, AND PROBABLY LESS, THAN ONE WEEK COULD AFFECT THE LENGTHY AEC REORGANIZATION PROCESS SO SERIOUSLY AS TO THWART THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE BRAZILIAN PARTICIPANTS.

3. THE TIMING OF THE CONFERENCE IS PARTICULARLY OPPORTUNE AND WAS CAREFULLY CHOSEN BY US: THE GEISEL GOVT UNDERSTANDS THAT IT FACES MAJOR POLICY DECISIONS IN THE FIELD OF ENERGY, SPECIFICALLY NUCLEAR ENERGY. THE NEW ELEMENTS OF THE ADMINISTRATION OPERATING IN THESE FIELDS SEEM TO BE LEARNING RAPIDLY WHAT THE PROBLEMS ARE BUT HAVE NOT YET MADE THE IMPORTANT POLICY CHOICES RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR ENERGY. A VISIT NOW BY DISTINGUISHED U.S. EXPERTS CAN PAY LARGE DIVIDENDS IN TERMS OF BRAZILIAN NUCLEAR POLICY FOR THE NEXT DECADE OR MORE AND OF THE TYPE OF NUCLEAR EQUIPMENT BRAZIL WILL BUY. THE COMMERCIAL IMPLICATIONS ARE WELL UNDERSTOOD IN WASHINGTON; THE POTENTIAL FOR U.S. EXPORTS IS INDEED LARGE.

4. WITH RESPECT TO BOTH POLICY AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES, WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT BRAZIL'S GROWING ORIENTATION TOWARD EUROPE IN THE FIELD OF NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY. AS WASHINGTON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IS WELL AWARE, THERE IS INTENSE INTEREST AND EFFORT ON THE PART OF SEVERAL OTHER NATIONS TO GUIDE AND SUPPLY BRAZIL IN ITS NUCLEAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT. IN THE FACE OF VIGOROUS EUROPEAN EFFORTS, THE DELAY OF THE HIGH-LEVEL VISIT FOR A SUBSTANTIAL PERIOD COULD BE INTERPRETED AMONG INFLUENTIAL POLICYMAKERS AS A RELATIVE LACK OF INTEREST ON OUR PART IN BRAZIL'S NUCLEAR FUTURE.

5. I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT APOSTPONEMENT WOULD PUT INTO QUESTION THE SECRETARY'S VERY RECENT SPECIFIC ASSURANCES OF U.S. READINESS TO INVIGORATE US-LATAM RELATIONSHIPS AND INTERCHANGES IN THE FIELDS OF ENERGY AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFER. THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF BRAZILIAN SKEPTICISM ABOUT U.S. PERFORMANCE TO BE OVERCOME AND TO SAY THE LEAST A LAST MINUTE PULL-OUT FROM THE CONFERENCE WOULD NOT BE HELPFUL IN THIS REGARD.

6. FOR ALL THESE REASONS, I HOPE THAT THE DEPT WILL INTERVENE ENERGENTICALLY TO PERSUADE THE AEC TO MAINTAIN THE VISIT AS SCHEDULED.
CRIMMINS

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